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The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter

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# The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter

Translated by Donald Keene, New York

## Introduction

*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter (Taketori Monogatari)* is considered to be the earliest surviving work of fiction in the Japanese language. Efforts to date it have been unsuccessful, but it is probably a work of the late ninth or early tenth century. The author is unknown. A number of texts have come down to us, each with its share of variants. It is the practice of modern editors to adopt the variant which makes the best sense, but even so there are passages which defy our interpretation. There are also contradictions within the tale itself: e. g., the age of the bamboo cutter is stated at the beginning of the story to be seventy, but he is only fifty years old at the close. However, the meaning of the text is by and large clear, and such minor difficulties need not interfere with our enjoyment.

A translation of the tale was made by F.V. Dickins and published in 1888. It has remained the only English version in spite of its dullness and inaccuracies. A German translation by M. Shimada and F. W. Mohr (in *Nippon*, 1, 2, 1935) is better but incomplete. The French translation by René Sieffert (in *Bulletin de la Maison Franco-Japonaise, Nouvelle Série*, II, 1952) is excellent. The text I have used (essentially that in the *Gunsho Ruijū*, kan 309) differs somewhat from M. Sieffert's, but his lengthy introduction and notes, which I have not felt it necessary to duplicate here, are recommended to the reader.

My purpose in making a new English translation of the *Taketori Monogatari* has been to communicate some of the charm and humor which make this one of the most famous of Japanese tales.

### The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter

Once upon a time there lived an old bamboo cutter. Every day he would make his way into the fields and mountains to gather bamboo, which he fashioned into all manner of things. This old man was called Sanuki no Miyakko.<sup>1)</sup> One day he noticed a light at the root of a bamboo stalk and, thinking that this was very strange, went over to examine it. He saw that the light shone inside the hollow bamboo, where a most fetching little girl about three inches tall was sitting. The old man said, 'I have found you because you are here, in this bamboo which I look at every morning and evening. It must be that you are meant to be my child.' He took her in his hands and brought her back to his house, where he entrusted the child to his old wife. She was an enchanting creature, and still so young that they kept her in a little cradle, the better to care for her.

From that time on it often happened that when the old man went out to cut bamboo he would find a stalk filled with gold, and in this way he gradually became very rich.

The child grew rapidly in their care. In just three months she was already as tall as a grown woman,<sup>2)</sup> and they decided that she should be suitably costumed. Her hair was done up in a bun, and they had her put on a trailing robe.<sup>3)</sup> The greatest pains were taken with her upbringing - she was not even permitted to leave her curtained chamber. The child was of a beauty unrivalled in the world, so great indeed that the house was filled with an all-pervading light. When the old man felt in poor spirits and was in pain, just to look at the child would make the pain stop, and his anger too would melt away.

For many years the old man went on gathering bamboo, and he became a man of great affluence. Now that the child had attained her full height, a diviner was summoned to bestow a woman's name on her. He called her Nayotake no Kaguya-hime - the Shining Princess of the Young Bamboo. On the occasion of her name-giving, a feast graced by entertainments of every description was held that lasted three days. Men and women alike

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1) This name exists in several variants, depending on the text, and at the end of the story is given as Miyakkomaro.

2) Perhaps used symbolically to suggest the bamboo, which grows very tall in a short time.

3) Putting up the hair and donning a long skirt formed part of the maturity rites for girls corresponding to the *gempuku* for boys.

were invited, and it was an occasion of the utmost splendor.

#### The Suitors

Every man in the realm, whether of high or low degree, was consumed by the desire of winning Kaguya-hime, or at least of seeing her; just to hear about her made men wild with love. But it was not easy, even for those who stationed themselves on the fence around the house or at the gate, to catch a glimpse of her. Unable to sleep peacefully at night, they would go out into the darkness to poke holes in the fence, hoping in their folly to peep at her. But all their prowling around the silent house was to no avail. Even when they ventured to address the members of the household, no attention was paid to them. Many a young noble spent his nights and days by the house, refusing to go away. Those suitors of shallower affections decided eventually that they were wasting their time and ceased to come.

Among those who persisted in their courtship were five celebrated lovers whose attentions never abated and who came night and day. They were Prince Ishitsukuri, Prince Kuramochi, the Minister of the Right Abe no Mimuraji, the Grand Counsellor Ōtomo no Miyuki, and the Middle Counsellor Isonokami no Marotari. Whenever these men heard of anyone who was even moderately good-looking - although the country was by no means deficient in such women - they burned to see her, and it was thus not surprising that in their desire to behold Kaguya-hime they gave up all nourishment and did nothing but languish for her. They would go to her house and wander around aimlessly, even though there was little likelihood that anything would come of it. They wrote her letters which she did not answer. They addressed her odes of lamentation of their composition, but all without effect. Nevertheless, they kept up their visits, admitting no obstacles, whether the snows and ice of December or the blazing heat and lightning of July.

Once they called the bamboo cutter, and each of them begged the old man on bended knees with hands joined in supplication to bestow the girl on him, but the old man answered, 'I am not her father, and she is not obliged to follow my wishes.' And thus the months and the days went by.

These gentlemen accordingly returned to their houses where, sunken in meditation, they prayed and made petitions to the gods. But however much they tried to forget Kaguya-hime, they

could not. In spite of what the old man had said, they thought it improbable that the lady would never marry, and this gave them hope. They went about with expressions of consecrated love on their faces.

The old man, observing them, said to Kaguya-hime, 'My precious child, I realize that you are a divinity in human form, but I have tried to the best of my ability to raise you in a suitable manner. Will you not listen to what an old man has to say?' Kaguya-hime replied, 'What could you possibly ask of me to which I would not consent? I do not even know for certain that I am an immortal, and I think of you alone as my father.'

'Oh, how happy your words make me!' exclaimed the old man. 'I am now over seventy, and I do not know if today or tomorrow may not be my last. It is the custom in this world for men and women to marry and in that way for their families to flourish. Why do you not marry?'

Kaguya-hime answered, 'Why should I do such a thing?' The old man said, 'Even though you are a transformed deity, you have a woman's body. While I still remain in the world you may if you choose remain unmarried, but one day you will be left alone. These gentlemen have been coming here faithfully for months and even years. Why do you not listen to what they have to say and select one of them as your husband?' Kaguya-hime said, 'All I can think is that I should certainly regret it if, in spite of my unattractive looks, I married someone without being sure of the depth of his feelings, and he then proved to be fickle. However grand a person he may be, I should not wish to marry him unless I were sure he was sincere.'

'I agree entirely with what you say,' replied the old man. 'Now, what kind of sentiments must a man possess before you are willing to marry him? All these gentlemen have shown exceptional devotion.'

Kaguya-hime said, 'I am not looking for any extraordinary depth of emotions. It is quite a small thing that I insist on. All five of them seem to possess the same sentiments. How can I tell which of them is the most deserving? If one of them will show me something I desire, it will prove his affections are the noblest, and I shall belong to him. Please tell this to the gentlemen if they come again.' 'That is a splendid idea,' the old man said in assent.

About sunset the suitors gathered at the house as usual.

One of them played a flute, another recited a poem, and the others sang from score, whistled or beat time with their fans. While this was going on the old man appeared. 'You have done my humble house too great an honor by your visits month after month and year after year. I am overcome with gratitude. My life is now so uncertain that I do not know whether today or tomorrow may be my last, and I have suggested to Kaguya-hime that she consider well and choose one of you gentlemen. However, she insists on knowing how genuine your affections really are, as is only proper. She says that she will serve the one of you who proves his superiority by showing her something she desires. I think it is a good plan, for then none of you will resent her choice.' The five men all agreed that it was indeed an excellent plan, and the old man returned inside the house.

Kaguya-hime said, 'I should like Prince Ishizukuri to bring me the stone begging-bowl of the Buddha. Prince Kuramochi should go to the mountain in the Eastern Sea called Hōrai<sup>4)</sup> and fetch me a branch of a tree that grows there, whose roots are silver, whose trunk is gold, and which bears fruits of white jewels. The next man should bring me a robe made of the fur of Chinese fire-rats. Ōtomo, the Grand Counsellor, is to bring me the five-colored jewel from a dragon's head. And Isonokami, the Middle Counsellor, should bring me a swallow's easy-delivery charm.'<sup>5)</sup>

The old man said, 'These are all very difficult tasks. The things you ask for are not to be found in Japan. How shall I break the news to them?'

'I don't see what is so difficult about those tasks,' said Kaguya-hime.

'I'll tell them at any rate,' said the old man and went outside. When he had related what was expected of them, the princes and nobles exclaimed, 'Why doesn't she simply say, 'Stay away from my house'? They all went away in disgust.

#### The Stone Begging-Bowl of the Buddha

Nevertheless, they felt that they could not live without seeing the girl, and they reflected, 'Is there anything we would

4) The Peng-lai of Chinese Taoist mythology, the mountain of Paradise.

5) The charm is a cowrie, the shape of which had given it the name *Koyasugai* - 'easy-delivery shell'. It is curious that throughout the story the swallow is represented as giving birth to young, instead of laying eggs.

not fetch for her, even from India?'

Prince Ishizukuri was a man of cunning and realized how unlikely he was to find the one and only begging-bowl, even if he journeyed a hundred, thousand, million miles to India. Leaving word with Kaguya-hime that he was departing that very day for India in search of the begging-bowl, he remained away for three years. At a mountain temple in the province of Yamato he obtained a pot which was pitch-black with soot from having hung in the kitchen before the image of Binzuru.<sup>6)</sup> He put it in a brocade bag which he fastened to a spray of artificial flowers, and carried it to Kaguya-hime's house. When she was shown the bowl, she looked on it with suspicion. She opened the note which was enclosed: 'I have worn myself out journeying the roads of sea and mountains; in quest of the stone bowl my tears have flowed.'

Kaguya-hime examined whether the bowl gave off a light,<sup>7)</sup> but there was not so much as the glimmer of a firefly. She returned the bowl with the verse, 'I thought that at least the sparkle of the fallen dew would lodge inside - why did you bring this bowl from the Mountain of Darkness?'<sup>8)</sup> The Prince threw away the bowl at the gate and replied to her verse, 'When it was met with the Mountain of Brightness it lost its light perhaps; now I discard the bowl<sup>9)</sup> but still keep my hopes.' He sent this into the house, but Kaguya-hime did not deign to answer him, and as she would not even listen to his pleas, he went sorrowfully away, muttering to himself.

#### The Jewelled Branch from Paradise

Prince Kuramochi, a man of stratagems, reported to the court that he was about to depart for Kyūshū in order to take a cure at the hot springs. He left word at the same time for Kaguya-hime that he was off in quest of the jewelled branch. He was accompanied from the capital as far as Naniwa by his full staff of retainers. Announcing his intention of travelling incognito, the Prince set out from Naniwa with only his personal servants instead of the customary large retinue. Those who had seen him off returned to the capital. Three days later,

6) Pindola in Sanskrit; often functioned as a kitchen-god.

7) It was believed that holy relics gave off a light.

8) Pun on Ogura, which is the name of a mountain and contains the sound *kurai* - 'dark.'

9) Pun on *hachi*, 'bowl', and *haji*, 'shame'.

when the prince had caused it to appear that he had gone, his ship was rowed back to port.

The Prince before his departure had left careful instructions: six of the finest jewellers of the time were summoned; a house was built for them in a remote place where outsiders were unlikely to penetrate; and a triple wall was erected around the area.<sup>10)</sup> The craftsmen were sent to live in the house, where they were joined by the Prince himself, who devoted the revenues of all his sixteen domains to having a jewelled branch created in exact compliance with Kaguya-hime's description. Having thus cleverly managed everything, the Prince secretly left for Naniwa with the branch.

He sent word ahead informing his household of his return by ship, and acted as if he were in terrible anguish. A great many people went to Naniwa to welcome his ship. The Prince placed the jewelled branch in a long wooden box which he wrapped and took ashore with him. Word of this soon got abroad, and rumor had it that Prince Kuramochi was bringing back an *udonge* flower<sup>11)</sup> to the capital. When Kaguya-hime heard this report, she was oppressed at the possibility that the Prince had defeated her.

Just then there was a knocking at the gate, and it was announced that Prince Kuramochi had arrived. The old man, hearing that the Prince had come while still in his travelling clothes, went out to greet him. 'I have brought back at the risk of my life the jewelled branch,' proclaimed the Prince. 'Please show it to Kaguya-hime.' The old man took it inside. There was a note attached to the branch: 'Even had it cost me my life I should not have returned empty-handed, without breaking off the jewelled branch.'

While the lady was sorrowfully scanning this verse, the old bamboo cutter rushed in. 'The Prince has brought back a jewelled branch from Paradise, exactly the one you requested. What more can you ask of him? He has come directly here in his travelling clothes without even stopping at his own home. Please grant him an audience at once.' The lady, without saying a word, was brooding disconsolately, her head resting on her arm.

10) Another text for *kamai*, 'enclosure', has *kama*, 'furnace', meaning that a triple furnace was erected for the artisans to use.

11) A mythical plant (*udambara* in Sanskrit) said to bloom once every 3,000 years.



'There need be no further discussion now,' said the Prince, and with these words stepped up on the verandah. The old man, considering that this was indeed the case, said to Kaguya-hime, 'In all Japan there is not another jewelled branch like this. How can you deny him now? Besides, he is such a splendid-looking man.'

She answered, 'It was because I did not wish to refuse outright what you asked of me, father, that I specified such outlandish things. It is really most vexing that he should have surprised me this way by bringing back the branch.' The old man, ignoring her words, prepared the nuptial chamber.

The old man asked the Prince, 'In what kind of place was the tree? The branch is unbelievably beautiful.' The Prince replied, 'Three years ago, along about the tenth day of the second moon, I boarded ship at Naniwa and put out to sea. I had no idea in which direction to head, but told myself that unless I could obtain what I was seeking, life would not be worth living, and I let the ship be carried forward at the will of the capricious winds. I reflected that if I should die nothing more could be done, but as long as I remained alive I would keep sailing on, and eventually I might come to the mountain called Hōrai. The ship was rowed out into the waves and drifted farther and farther away from Japan. Sometimes the waves were so rough that I thought we would sink to the bottom of the sea; sometimes we were carried by the wind to unknown lands where demon-like beings appeared and attempted to kill us. Sometimes we lost all track of our whereabouts and drifted blindly on the sea. Sometimes our food ran out, and we ate the roots of plants or managed to prolong our lives only with shells we took from the sea. Sometimes unspeakably horrible monsters rose up intending to devour us.'

'On this journey, where there was none who could help us, we were afflicted by sicknesses of every description and, ignorant even of the direction we headed, we allowed the ship to wander as it pleased on the sea. At about nine o'clock in the morning of the five-hundredth day of our journey we faintly perceived a mountain rising from the waves. We gazed at it intently from the ship. The mountain floating imposingly on the sea, tall and graceful in shape. This, I thought, must be the mountain I am looking for, but nonetheless I felt afraid. For two or three days we sailed around the mountain, when a woman dressed like some celestial being emerged from its side and

began dipping water with a silver bowl. I went ashore and asked her the name of the mountain. She answered, 'This is the mountain of Hōrai.' Her words filled me with boundless joy. I asked her, 'With whom have I the pleasure of speaking?' 'My name is Ukanruri,' she said, and with these words disappeared into the mountain.

'There did not appear to be any means to climb the mountain. As I walked around its steep sides, I saw flowering trees of a species unknown to me. Streams gold, silver and emerald in color gushed from the mountain, and spanning them were bridges of precious stones. Beside them stood some glittering trees, among which the one whose branch I took was by no means the most impressive. However, since it corresponded exactly with the lady's specifications, I broke off this spray of blossoms.

'The mountain was replete with delights. Nothing in this world will bear comparison with it. But once having secured the branch, I felt impatient to be on my way. I boarded ship and, borne along by a favoring wind, returned in somewhat over four hundred days. Perhaps my safe return should be attributed to the power of the prayers I made. Yesterday I left Naniwa for the capital, and I have come directly here without so much as changing my brine-soaked clothes.'

When the Prince had finished his words, the old man sighed and recited the verse, 'In all the years that I have gathered bamboo in mountain and field I have never experienced such hardships.'

The Prince said, 'My heart, which for many days has been filled with anxiety, today is at peace.' He composed a reply to the old man's verse: 'My sleeve has dried today; I shall forget the many hardships.'

Just then a band of six men burst into the garden. One of them held a letter inserted in a letter-clasp.<sup>12)</sup> He declared, 'I am Ayabe no Uchimaro, an artisan of the Office of Handicrafts. For over a thousand days I devoted all my energies to making a jewelled branch for you, and during all that while I refrained from eating the five cereals.<sup>13)</sup> This is no small matter, but you have yet to pay my wages. Please pay me now so that I may take care of my assistants.' He proffered the note. The old bamboo cutter shook his head in perplexity,

12) In ancient times letters were presented at the end of split sticks.

13) By abstaining from eating the five cereals it was believed that one enhanced the chances of success in a project.

wondering what the artisan was talking about. The Prince stood there dumbfounded, apparently having quite lost his composure.

Kaguya-hime, hearing these words, exclaimed, 'Bring me the letter!' This is what she found written: 'For a thousand days the Prince remained in hiding together with us lowly workmen, and had us make a wonderful jewelled branch. He promised to grant us in return posts as officials. Recently we thought the matter over and decided that the branch must have been the one requested by Kaguya-hime, who is to become the Prince's mistress. We have therefore come here to receive compensation from this household.'

Kaguya-hime, hearing a cry of 'We should be paid!', felt her gloom, which had grown darker with the setting sun, change to laughter and gaiety. She called over the old man. 'I really thought it came from a tree in paradise, but it is obviously a shameful counterfeit. Please give it back at once.' The old man nodded his head and said, 'Now that we know for a fact that the branch is not genuine, it is a very simple matter to return it.'

Kaguya-hime's heart was filled with contentment. To the poem she had received she now sent the reply: 'Hearing it was genuine I examined it, but the jewelled branch was false as your words.' She returned the branch. The old bamboo cutter, unhappy that he had tried so hard to induce her to marry, shut his eyes in dismay. The Prince, uncomfortable whether he stood or sat, waited outside uneasily. When it grew dark he slunk off.

Kaguya-hime summoned the workmen who had complained of their woes. 'Happy men!' she cried, and presented them with generous rewards. The craftsmen were delighted, and left saying, 'We have received what we hoped for.' On the road home they were intercepted by Prince Kuramochi, who had them beaten so severely that the blood flowed. It little availed them that they had been rewarded, for every bit of the treasure was taken from them, and they fled.

'Life can hold no greater humiliation for me. I have not only failed to win the girl, but I am ashamed of what the world must think of me,' the Prince said, and went off by himself into distant mountains. The court officials and the Prince's attendants went off in parties in search of him, but as they were unsuccessful they could only conclude that he was probably dead.

### The Robe Made of Fire-Rat Skins

The Minister of the Right Abe no Mimuraji was a man of wealth and a flourishing house. He wrote a letter to a gentleman named Wang Ching, who had arrived that year on a Chinese ship, asking Wang to buy and send him a robe made of the skins of fire-rats. He despatched his letter to the port of Hakata with Ono no Fusamori, a man he had chosen from among his servants for his especial reliability. The servant took the letter to Hakata and presented it together with a sum of gold to Wang Ching. After Wang had opened and read the letter he replied, 'Robes made from the skins of fire-rats do not exist in my country. I have indeed heard of such things, but have yet to see one. If one really does exist in the world it is curious that it has not already been brought to China. This will be a very difficult purchase to negotiate. However, I shall make inquiries among the rich men of India to ask if by any chance one has turned up there. If unsuccessful I shall return the money with your servant.'

The Chinese ship came back to Japan.<sup>14)</sup> The Minister, learning that Fusamori had returned and was on his way to the capital, sent a swift-footed horse to meet him. Fusamori mounted the horse and rode from Kyūshū to the capital in a bare seven days. He brought a letter from Wang Ching: 'I have managed at last, by sending messengers everywhere, to obtain the robe of fire-rat skins, which I am now sending. This has been no easy thing to acquire now any more than in the past. I was informed that long ago a great Indian priest had brought it to this country and that it was now to be found in a mountain temple in the west. Eventually, with help from the authorities, I was able to purchase it. The officials told my man that the money you sent was insufficient and I was therefore obliged to add some of my own. I should appreciate it if you would please forward fifty ounces of gold by the return voyage of the ship. If you prefer not to send the money, please return the robe.'

When the Minister read these words he exclaimed, 'What can he be thinking of? Of course I'll give the trifling sum that he now requires. How happy I am that he has sent me the robe!' He made a profound obeisance in the direction of China.

The box containing the robe was fashioned exquisitely and

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14) One must suppose another voyage in between.

inlaid with precious stones. The robe itself was of a dark blue. A golden glow emanated from the tips of the hairs. It was obviously a treasure of matchless beauty. Its surpassing loveliness was even more remarkable than its invulnerability to flame. 'This must surely be the robe Kaguya-hime desires,' he said. 'Oh, this is too splendid!' He placed the robe in a box which he attached to a branch and, imagining that he would spend that very night at her house, took great care in beautifying himself. He composed a poem to take along: 'I have wept for boundless love, but today I wear with dry sleeves a fur robe that will not burn in fire.'

The Minister took the box to Kaguya-hime's gate, where he waited. The bamboo cutter came out, accepted the present, and showed it to Kaguya-hime. 'What a lovely robe it is!' she said, 'But I still cannot be sure that it is genuine.' The bamboo cutter said, 'Whether it is or it isn't, I shall invite him in. There is not another such fur robe in the realm - you would do best to think it genuine. Don't make people suffer so!' He invited the Minister inside.

When the old woman saw how the Minister had been ushered within, she also thought in her heart that this time there would certainly be a marriage. The old man grieved that Kaguya-hime was still single, and he constantly sought a suitable man for her, but she was so loth to marry that it was proper for him not to have attempted to force her.

Kaguya-hime said to the old man, 'If this fur robe does not burn when it is put in the fire, I shall believe that it is genuine and do what is expected of me. You say that you have never seen its likes, and that it must certainly be genuine, but I should like to test it in fire.' 'That is quite reasonable,' said the old man, and he informed the Minister. The latter replied, 'I secured this fur robe, which was not even to be had in China, with the greatest difficulty. What doubt could there be? All the same, please do test it in the fire at once.' They put it in the flames, where it burned brightly. 'Just as I thought,' said Kaguya-hime, 'it was not the right fur.' The Minister turned the color of leaves of grass. Kaguya-hime was enchanted. She wrote a poem in response to the Minister's, which she put in the jewelled box: 'Had I known it would burn leaving not a trace, I should have kept the fur robe away from the flames.' The Minister departed.

### The Jewel in the Dragon's Head

Ōtomo no Miyuki, the Grand Counsellor, summoned together all the members of his household and announced, 'There is a shining jewel of five colors in a dragon's head. Anyone who can get it for me will have whatever he desires.' His men, receiving the command, said, 'Your lordship's orders are exceedingly gracious. However, jewels are no easy things to come by, much less jewels in a dragon's head.' The Grand Counsellor retorted, 'Servants should think only of fulfilling their master's commands, even if it is at the risk of their lives. I am not asking for something from India or China which cannot be found in Japan. Even in this country dragons are constantly rising from the sea and mountains or descending from the sky. What makes you think it is so difficult?'

The men said, 'In that case, we shall say no more, and however difficult it may be, we shall bring back the jewel as you have commanded.' The Grand Counsellor smiled, 'You have a reputation for being faithful servants. How could it be that you would disobey my orders?' With these words he sent them out in quest of the jewel in the dragon's head, providing them with all the satins, raw silk and copper coins in his palace, to pay for their food along the way.

'Until you return we shall eat only vegetarian food,'<sup>15)</sup> he said. 'But don't come back without the jewel.' The servants departed with their several instructions. 'He told us not to return without the jewel, so we might as well head in whichever direction our feet happen to point. What a crazy thing to ask of us!' grumbled the servants. They divided among themselves the valuables they had received. Then some went to their own homes, where they shut themselves up, and others went to places they wished to visit. 'However much of a parent or lord he may be, he should not ask such an unreasonable thing of us,' they complained.

'I could not expect Kaguya-hime to live here in such a disreputable-looking place,' said the Grand Counsellor one day, and forthwith had a beautiful house built for her. It was varnished with lacquer; the walls were sprinkled with gold-leaf; and the roof was thatched with silken threads dyed in

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15) As in note 13, we have to do with abstinence as a means of ensuring success. However, here it is the superior who practices abstinence to help the efforts of the inferior.

many colors. As for the interior of the house, no words could describe the splendor of the paintings on figured damask that hung in each alcove. The Grand Counsellor's concubines were busily making preparations for what they thought was the certain arrival of Kaguya-hime, while his first-wife, neglected, spent her nights and days alone.

The Counsellor anxiously waited for the return of the men he had despatched, but no news had come by the New Year. In his impatience he disguised himself and went in great secret to Naniwa, accompanied only by two retainers. There he inquired, 'Have you heard anything about men of the Grand Counsellor Ōtomo who sailed off to slay a dragon and get the jewel in its head?' 'What a strange story!' replied a boatman with a laugh, 'we have no boats here that do that kind of work.' The Grand Counsellor thought, 'Just the kind of stupid answer you'd expect from a boatman. He said that simply because he doesn't know.' Then he reflected, 'I am strong enough a bowman that if I come across a dragon I can shoot it dead and take the jewel myself. I won't wait for those rascals to come dawdling home.' He boarded a ship and sailed around from one arm of the sea to the next until he reached the distant ocean off Kyūshū.

What happened then? A terrible gale began to blow, the world became dark, and the ship was tossed about by a storm. The wind blew the ship hither and thither until it seemed that it would surely plunge down to the bottom of the sea. The waves lashed again and again at the ship, sucking it down, and lightning flashed almost on top of the vessel. The Grand Counsellor was completely bewildered. 'I have never been in such a dreadful predicament before. What will happen to me?' The steersman replied, 'In all the years that I have been sailing the seas, I have never seen such a terrible storm. If the ship doesn't go down, it is sure to be struck by lightning. And if by good fortune our lives are spared by the gods, we will probably be blown all the way to the South Seas. It is all because I serve a cruel master that I must suffer an unnecessary death!' He wept.

When the Grand Counsellor heard these words he cried, in between violent bouts of vomiting, 'When aboard ship I trust in what the steersman says as in a great mountain. Why do you speak in such a disheartening way?' The steersman answered, 'I am not a god and I don't know what to do. It is because you

intend to kill a dragon that the wind is blowing and the waves raging, and we are even getting thunderbolts rained down almost on our heads. This storm is being whipped up by the dragon's breath. You should pray at once to the gods.' 'Very well,' said the Grand Counsellor. 'God of steersmen, hear my words. I thought in my stupidity and childishness to kill a dragon. Henceforth I promise not to disturb a hair of one.' He alternately stood and sat as he uttered this vow, shouting and weeping. He repeated these words, it must have been a thousand times, until at last the thunder stopped. The steersman said, 'This is the doing of a dragon. The wind that is blowing now is a favoring one, and we are being taken in the right direction.' The Grand Counsellor did not heed him.

For three or four days the wind blew and finally brought them to land. The sailors recognized the shore as Akashi in Harima. The Grand Counsellor, however, imagining that they must have been driven ashore somewhere in the South Seas, heaved a great sigh and fell flat on his face. The men aboard the ship reported to the provincial officials, who went to call on the Grand Counsellor. The latter was unable to get up and continued to lie on his face at the bottom of the ship. They spread a mat for him in a pine field and unloaded him from the ship. Then, for the first time, he realized that he was not in the South Seas, and with an effort he was able to stand. He looked like a man with some horrible sickness - his belly vastly swollen and his eyes like plums. The provincial officials could not hold back their smiles when they saw him.

The Grand Counsellor gave orders to the officials to have a sedan chair prepared, and he was borne home, groaning all the way. When he arrived, the men he had sent out, who had somehow got word of his return, appeared to say, 'We were unable to get the jewel in the dragon's head, and that's why we couldn't return to your service. Now that you know how difficult it is to get the jewel we have come back, in the hope that you will not be too severe on us.' The Grand Counsellor sat up. 'You did well not to bring it back. Dragons and thunders are of the same species, and if you had tried to get the jewel, the dragons would have seen to it that many of you got killed. And if you had actually caught a dragon, it certainly would have meant the death of me. I am glad that you didn't catch one! That cursed thief of a Kaguya-hime was trying to kill us! I'll never go by her house again. And don't you go wandering off that way!' He



bestowed on the men who had failed to get the jewel what little remained of his fortune. When his former first-wife heard this, she laughed until her sides ached. The roof which had been thatched with silken threads was completely carried off by kites and rooks to line their nests.

#### The Easy-Delivery Charm of the Swallows

When the Middle Counsellor Isonokami no Marotari ordered the men of his employ to report to him if any swallows built nests, they asked him why he required this information. He answered, 'In order to get the easy-delivery charm that the swallow carries.' One man said, 'I have killed many swallows in my time, but I have never seen anything in their bellies. How could they pull out a charm just when they were about to give birth to a little one?' 'If any man sees it, it disappears,' said another.

Still another man said, 'Swallows are building nests in all the holes along the eaves of the roof of the Palace kitchens. If you send some dependable men to set up perches from which they can observe the swallows, they will certainly be able to see many little swallows being born. Then you can have them seize the charm.' The Middle Counsellor was pleased and said, 'That is most extraordinary. I hadn't any inkling of it. I am much interested in what you have said.' He ordered some twenty dependable men to climb up, build perches and wait there. From his mansion he sent an incessant stream of messengers to inquire whether the men had been able to secure the easy-delivery charm.

The swallows, terrified by all the people who had climbed up to the roof, did not return to their nests. When the Middle Counsellor got word of this, he was at a loss what to do. Just then an old man named Kuratsumaro who worked in the Palace kitchens said, 'I have a plan to suggest to his Excellency if he wishes to get the easy-delivery charm.' He was brought before the Middle Counsellor and seated directly in front of him.

Kuratsumaro said, 'You are trying to get the charm by clumsy means and you will never get it that way. Your twenty men have made such a great commotion climbing up to their perches that the swallows are frightened and will not approach. What you should do is to have the perches removed and the men withdraw. One dependable man should be put in an open-work basket with a robe attached. When the bird is about to give birth, the bas-

ket should be hoisted with the rope, and the man can quickly grab the charm. That is the best plan.' The Middle Counsellor said, 'An excellent plan indeed.' The perches were dismantled and the men all returned.

The Counsellor asked Kuratsumaro, 'How will we know when the swallow is about to give birth, so that the man can be hoisted in time?' Kuratsumaro answered, 'When the swallow is about to give birth, it raises its tail and circles around seven times. As soon as it has circled seven times, hoist the basket and have the man take the charm.'<sup>16)</sup> The Counsellor was overjoyed by what Kuratsumaro had said. 'How wonderful to have my prayers granted, even if by someone not in my employ!' He removed his cloak and offered it to the old man, saying, 'Come tonight to the Palace kitchens.'

When it grew dark the Middle Counsellor went to the kitchens and observed that the swallows were indeed building nests there. Everything was done exactly as Kuratsumaro had suggested. A man was put in a basket which was hoisted at the proper moment, but he called down that he could not feel anything in the nest. The Counsellor angrily retorted, 'You just aren't searching in the proper way. Nobody here can search as well as I can. I myself shall go up.' He got into the basket and was hoisted up. He peered into the nest and saw a swallow with its tail lifted circling about furiously. He at once stretched out his arm and felt in the nest. His fingers touched something flat. 'I have it! Lower me now! I have it!' His men gathered round, but in their efforts to lower him quickly they pulled too hard, and the rope snapped. The Middle Counsellor plunged down, landing on his back on top of a great cauldron.

His men rushed to him in consternation and lifted him in their arms. He lay motionless, showing the whites of his eyes. The men drew some water and had him swallow a little. At length he regained consciousness, and they carried him down by the hands and feet from the top of the cauldron. When they asked him how he felt, he answered, almost underneath his breath, 'I can understand a little of what is going on, but I am unable to move my back. But I am glad that I managed to get the charm. Light a torch and bring it here. I want to see what the charm looks like.' He lifted his head and opened his hand. He was holding some old bird-droppings. He cried, 'Alas, it was all to no avail!'

16) A sentence of no apparent relevance has been omitted here in translation.

The Middle Counsellor tried to keep people from learning that he had been stricken because of a childish prank, and this constant worry had the effect of gravely weakening him. It depressed him more that people might hear of his escapade and laugh at him than that he had failed to get the charm. This anxiety increased each day. He felt that it was better that he die of his illness than that people should learn what had happened. Kaguya-hime, hearing of his unfortunate condition, sent him a poem of enquiry: 'The years pass without the waves returning to the pines of Suminoe where I waited; you have not found the charm, I hear, is it true?'<sup>17)</sup>

He asked that her poem be read to him. He then lifted his head very feebly, barely able to write with great pain while someone else held the paper: 'I failed to get the charm and was about to die in despair, but have you not saved me?' With these words he expired. Kaguya-hime was rather touched.

#### The Imperial Hunt

The Emperor, on being informed that Kaguya-hime was a beauty unrivalled in his realm, said to a maid of honor, 'Please discover for me what sort of woman this Kaguya-hime is, who has caused the ruin of so many men and refuses to marry.' The lady accepted his command and departed. When she arrived at the bamboo cutter's house, the old woman reverently showed her in. The maid of honor said, 'I have been ordered by His Majesty to ascertain whether Kaguya-hime is as beautiful as people say. I have come now for this purpose.' 'I shall tell her,' said the old woman and went within.

She said to Kaguya-hime, 'Please go out at once and meet the Emperor's messenger.' Kaguya-hime replied, 'How can I appear before her when I am so unattractive?' 'Don't be absurd. How can you possibly show such disrespect to the Emperor's representative?' 'Even if it is a command from the Emperor, I am not struck with awe,' asserted Kaguya-hime. She gave no indication of being willing to meet the lady. Although Kaguya-hime was just like a child she had borne herself, the old woman felt a great deal of reserve towards her, and could not scold her as she would have liked even when the girl spoke in such a disrespectful manner. The old woman returned to the maid of

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17) There are various puns in this verse, including *matsu*, 'pines' and 'to wait' and *kai*, 'shell' and *kai nashi*, 'in vain'.

honor and said, 'I must apologize, but the girl is of a terrible disposition, and will not see you.'

The maid of honor said, 'I was ordered to have a look at her without fail. If I do not, how shall I be able to return? Is it possible that anyone living in the realm would refuse to obey the royal command? Please do not let her act in so unreasonable a manner!' She spoke these words intending to shame Kaguya-hime, but when the latter heard them she refused all the more vehemently to obey. 'If I am violating a royal command, let them execute me without delay,' she said.

The maid of honor returned to the Palace and reported what had happened. The Emperor listened and said merely, 'You can see that she is quite capable of causing the deaths of many people.' He still had his heart set on her, however, and would not accept defeat at her hands. He summoned the old man and the old woman and declared, 'Present to me Kaguya-hime whom you have in your keeping. I had heard reports of her beauty of face and form and sent my messenger to you, but to no avail, for she was unable to get a glimpse of the girl. Is it to be permitted that such disrespect become a habit?'

The old man humbly replied, 'The girl has no intention of serving at Court, and I am quite at a loss what to do about her. Nevertheless, I shall return and report your commands.'

The Emperor said, 'Why should a child, whom you have raised with your own hands, not do as you desire? If you present the girl for service here, how can I but reward you with court rank?'

The old man was overjoyed and went home. He related this conversation to Kaguya-hime, adding, 'These were the Emperor's commands. Are you still unwilling to serve him?'

Kaguya-hime answered, 'I utterly refuse to serve at the Court, and if I am forced I shall vanish. It will mean my death if I obtain you your court rank.'

'Don't do such a thing!' cried the old man. 'What use would court rank be to me if I couldn't behold my child? But how can you avoid performing service at Court? Would it really cause your death?'

'If you do not believe me, have me serve at the Court and see whether I don't die. Many men have showed me unusual affection, but all in vain. If I obey these commands from the Emperor, I shall feel ashamed of what people will think of my former heartlessness.'

The old man replied, 'My court rank is of no great importance when compared with the danger to your life. I shall go to the Palace and report that you still refuse to serve.' He reported to the Emperor: 'When, awed by your Majesty's commands, I attempted to persuade the child to enter your service, she told me that service in the Palace would cause her death. She is not a child born of my body, but one I found long ago in the mountains, and her ways are not like those of ordinary people.'

The Emperor said, 'I understand that your house is near the mountains. How would it be if, under pretext of an imperial hunt, I tried to get a look at her?'

'That is an excellent plan,' said the old man. 'If the imperial procession passes by at a time when she does not expect it, you may be able to see her.' The Emperor at once fixed a day for the hunt.

During the course of the hunt he entered Kaguya-hime's house and, looking around it, saw a person sitting there, so beautiful that she filled the room with light. He thought, this must be she, and approached her. Kaguya-hime tried to flee within, but the Emperor caught her by the sleeve. She covered her face, but the first glimpse was enough to convince him that this was a peerless beauty. 'I shall not let you go,' he cried. When, however, he attempted to lead her away, Kaguya-hime declared, 'Had my body been born on earth I should have served you, but as it is you will not be able to take me with you.'

The Emperor said, 'How is that possible? I will take you with me.' He summoned his palanquin. Just then Kaguya-hime suddenly vanished. The Emperor, realizing that she was indeed no ordinary mortal, was struck with amazement. 'I shall not insist any longer that you come with me, but please return to your former shape. Just one look at you and I shall go.' Kaguya-hime then reassumed her former appearance. The Emperor could not, however, dam the tide of his love, and showed his pleasure with the bamboo cutter who had brought about the meeting. The old man in return tendered a splendid banquet for the Emperor's officers. The Emperor bitterly regretted returning to the Palace without Kaguya-hime, and as he left the bamboo cutter's house he felt as though his soul remained behind. After he had entered his palanquin he sent this verse to Kaguya-hime: 'On my journey back to the Palace I shall be sad: it is because of the disobedience of Kaguya-hime who remains

here.<sup>18)</sup>

She wrote in reply: 'How could it be that one who has always lived in a house overgrown with weeds should visit your jeweled Palace?'

The Emperor felt all the less like leaving when he saw her poem, but since he could not spend the night, he had no choice but to return. The Palace ladies who usually served him were not comparable to Kaguya-hime and scarcely seemed human beings at all to the Emperor, although he had formerly considered them surpassingly lovely. In his heart there was room only for Kaguya-hime, and he lived all by himself. Without giving any reasons, he ceased to visit his consorts. He wrote letters to Kaguya-hime, and her replies were by no means unkind. He used also to send her poems attached to flowers or branches when he found especially attractive ones.

#### The Celestial Robe of Feathers

Three years went by while they thus consoled one another. At the beginning of spring of the new year Kaguya-hime gazed at the moon rising in all its splendor, and she seemed more pensive than usual. Someone who happened to be nearby admonished her, 'You shouldn't stare the moon in the face.' But when no one was around Kaguya-hime would often gaze at the moon and weep bitterly. At the time of the full moon of the seventh month, she sat outside seemingly immersed in thought. Her maidservants informed the bamboo cutter: 'Kaguya-hime has always looked sadly at the moon, but her preoccupation of late has not been normal. There must be something which is deeply worrying her. Please watch her carefully.' The old man asked Kaguya-hime, 'What troubles you so that you gaze at the moon with such sadness? The world is a happy place!' She answered, 'When I look at the moon the world seems lonely and sad. What else should worry me?'

He went over to Kaguya-hime and looked at her. She still appeared melancholy. He asked, 'My dear one, what are you thinking of? What worries you?'

'I am not thinking of anything. It's just that the whole world seems so depressing.'

'You shouldn't look at the moon,' the old man said. 'When-

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18) The last line might be interpreted: 'I turn back, I return because of Kaguya-hime'.

ever you do, you seem to worry about something.'

'How could I live without gazing at the moon?' Whenever the moon rose she would sit outside, lost in thought. On dark moonless nights she seemed to emerge from her reverie, but with the reappearance of the moon she would sigh and weep. Her maids whispered to one another, 'There really does seem to be something upsetting her,' but no one, not even her parents, knew what it was.

On a moonlit night towards the middle of the eighth month, Kaguya-hime, who was sitting outside, suddenly burst into a flood of tears. She now wept without caring whether people saw. Her parents noticing this asked her in alarm what the matter was. Kaguya-hime answered in tears, 'I have intended to tell you for a long time, but the fear that I should certainly upset you has kept me silent. But I can be silent no more - I must tell you everything. I am not a creature of this world; I come from the Palace of the Moon. I visited this world because of an obligation from the past. Now the time has come for me to return, and on the night of the next full moon people from my old country will come for me. I have no choice but to go. It has been the thought of the unhappiness this news will cause you which has grieved me since this spring.' She wept copiously.

The old man cried, 'What's that you say? I found you in a stick of bamboo when you were no bigger than a seed, and I have brought you up, my child, until now you stand as tall as I - who is going to take you away? Do you think that I will let them?' He added, 'If they do, I shall die.' His distraught weeping was really unbearable.

Kaguya-hime said, 'I have a father and a mother in the Palace of the Moon. When I came here from my country I said that it would be for just a little while, but I have already spent many years in this land. I have long dallied here, without thinking of my parents on the Moon. I feel no joy now that I am about to return, but only a terrible sadness. And yet, though it is not of my choosing, I must go.' They both wept uncontrollably. Her maids, who had been in her service for years, thought how they would regret separation, and how terribly they would miss the exquisiteness of her nature and her beauty, to which they were so accustomed. Choked by emotion, they gave themselves like the others to grief.

When the Emperor learned what was happening, he sent a mes-

senger to the bamboo cutter's house. The old man went out to receive him, weeping profusely. His beard had turned white from sorrow, his back was bent, and his eyes were swollen. He was just fifty this year, but his troubles seemed to have aged him suddenly. The imperial messenger reported the Emperor's words, 'Is it true that painful affliction has come your way?'

The bamboo cutter answered in tears, 'On the night of the full moon men are coming from the Palace of the Moon to fetch Kaguya-hime. I am deeply honored by His Majesty's kind inquiry, and beg him to despatch soldiers here on that night in order to catch whoever comes from the Moon.'

The messenger departed and, after reporting to the Emperor on the old man's condition, transmitted the request. The Emperor said, 'If I who had but a glimpse of her cannot put her from my thoughts, what must it be like for one who is accustomed to seeing her day and night?'

On the fifteenth, the day of the full moon, the Emperor issued commands to his officers and sent to the bamboo cutter's house two thousand men from different branches of the guards under the leadership of a Lesser Commander. No sooner did they arrive than a thousand men posted themselves on the wall and a thousand on the roof. Together with the numerous members of the household they formed an invulnerable defence. They were equipped with bows and arrows. The inside of the house was guarded by the womenfolk.

Inside the strong room of the house the old woman held Kaguya-hime in her arms. The old man, having tightly fastened the door, was standing on guard. He declared, 'Even people from Heaven will be no match for these defences.' He called to the men on the roof, 'Shoot at once if you see the smallest thing flying in the sky.' They answered, 'Our defences are so strong that even if a mosquito<sup>19)</sup> goes by we will shoot it down and expose its body.' Their words greatly reassured the old man.

Kaguya-hime said, 'In spite of your preparations, you will not be able to resist the men from the Moon. You will be powerless to shoot your arrows. No matter how strongly you fortify the place, when they come all will open before them. No matter how you try to resist them, when they come even the

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19) The word translated here as 'mosquito' has also been interpreted as meaning 'needle' or 'bat', depending on the text used.



bravest man will be unable to struggle.'

The old man cried, 'If they come after you, I'll tear out their eyes with my long nails. I'll grab them by the hair and throw them to the ground. I'll make them ashamed by exposing their behinds for all the officers to see.' He shouted in his wrath.

'Don't speak in such a loud voice,' said Kaguya-hime. 'It won't do for the men on the roof to hear you talk that way. How deeply it pains me that I must leave you without seeming to appreciate your feelings towards me. It was not fated that we should remain together, and soon I must go. This makes me very sad. It will not be easy for me to leave you without ever having repaid you, my parents, in any way. When I used to go and sit outside I would always beg for just one more year with you, but my wish was not granted. That was what made me so unhappy. It breaks my heart to upset you so and then to leave you. The people of the Moon are very beautiful and do not grow old. They have no worries either. And yet it does not make me happy to be going there. Instead, I am torn by longing because I shall not be able to look after you when you are old and decrepit.' She spoke in tears.

The old man angrily said, 'Don't say such painful things. No matter how beautiful those people are, they will not stand in my way.'

By now the evening had passed. About midnight the area of the house was suddenly illuminated by a light brighter than noon, as bright as ten full moons, so bright that one could see the pores of a man's skin. Then down from the heavens came men riding on clouds, who ranged themselves at a height of about five feet from the ground. Those inside and outside the house alike were frozen with fear at the sight, and none had the courage to resist. At length they plucked up their courage and tried to take their bows and arrows, but the strength had gone out of their hands, which were as paralyzed. Some especially valiant men with an immense effort tried to shoot arrows, but the arrows glanced off harmlessly in all directions. They were unable to put up a real fight and could only watch on stupefied.

The men standing before them were clad in raiment of unmatched beauty. They brought with them a flying chariot covered by a parasol of gauzy silk. The one among them who appeared to be the king called out, 'Miyakkomaro,<sup>20)</sup> come here!' and

20) See note 1.

the old man, who had voiced such bold sentiments, now prostrated himself before the stranger, feeling as if he were intoxicated. The king said, 'Old man, because of some trifling good deeds which you performed, we sent this young lady for a short while into the world to help you. Many years have now elapsed, and you have grown very wealthy. You have become like a different man. Kaguya-hime was obliged to remain with you humble people because of a sin which she had committed. The term of her punishment has been completed, and we have come for her. However much you lament, old man, you may not keep her here. Bring her forth at once.'

The old man said, 'Kaguya-hime has been in my care for over twenty years. The fact that you speak of 'a short while' makes me wonder if you do not mean some other Kaguya-hime at a different place. Besides, the Kaguya-hime who is here is suffering from a serious illness and cannot leave her room.'

No answer met his words. Instead, the king guided the flying chariot to the roof and called out, 'Kaguya-hime! Why have you lingered so long in such a filthy place?' The door of the strong room flew open, and the lattice-work windows also opened of their own accord. Kaguya-hime, whom the old woman had been clutching in her arms, stepped outside. The old woman, unable to hold her back, could only look up and weep.

Kaguya-hime went to where the bamboo cutter lay prostrate and weeping in his bewilderment. She said, 'It is not by my own will that I go now. At least please watch me as I ascend into the sky.'

'How can I watch you go when it is so painful? Are you going to go up to Heaven, abandoning me to whatever fate may be in store? Take me with you!'

She was at a loss what to do. 'I shall write you a letter before I leave. Whenever you long for me, take the letter and read it.' In tears she wrote these words: 'Had I but been born in this land I should never have caused you any unhappiness. This moment of parting is most painfully unwelcome to me. Please take this cloak, that now I remove, as a memento of me. On nights when the moon appears in the sky, gaze at it well, and I shall feel as though I am returning from the sky to the parents I now must leave behind.'

Some of the celestial beings carried boxes with them. One contained a robe of feathers, another the elixir of immortality. 'Take some of the elixir in this jar,' said one of the men.

'You must be in poor health after the things you have had to eat in this dirty place.' Kaguya-hime tasted a little. Then, thinking it might serve as a small remembrance, she began to wrap some elixir in the cloak she had removed, when a celestial being stopped her. They took the robe of feathers from the box and wished to put it on her, but Kaguya-hime said, 'Wait just a moment. When one puts on this robe one's heart changes, and I have still a few words I must say.' She wrote another letter. The celestial beings impatiently cried, 'It is late!' 'Do not betray your lack of understanding of human feelings,' said Kaguya-hime. In a perfectly calm manner she gave the letter to someone to deliver to the Emperor. She showed no signs of agitation.

The letter said, 'Although you deigned to send many people to keep me here, escorts have come who will not be denied. Now they are taking me with them, to my regret and sorrow. I would not serve you, and have been so troublesome that you must surely have thought my behavior quite incomprehensible. It weighs heavy on my heart that you must have thought my stubborn refusal to obey your commands an act of disrespect.' To the above was added the verse: 'Now when I am about to don the robe of feathers, I think longingly of my lord.' Kaguya-hime attached to the letter some of the elixir of immortality from the jar, and asked the commander of the guards to offer it to the Emperor. One of the celestial beings took the present and passed it on to the commander. No sooner had he taken it in his hands than Kaguya-hime put on the robe of feathers, and at once lost all recollection of her sorrow and pity for the old man. Those who wear this robe know no griefs. Kaguya-hime climbed into the chariot and, accompanied by a hundred celestial beings, rose into the sky.

The old man and the old woman shed bitter tears, but to no avail. When they had her letter read to them, they cried, 'Why should we cling to our lives? For whose sake? All is empty now.' They would not take medicine, and never left their sick-beds again.

The commander returned to the Palace with his men. He reported in detail the reasons why they had failed to prevent Kaguya-hime's departure, and presented the letter with the jar of elixir. The Emperor felt much distressed when he had read Kaguya-hime's words. He would not eat anything, nor did he permit any entertainments. He summoned his ministers and

great nobles and asked them which mountain was closest to Heaven. One man answered, 'There is a mountain in Suruga which is near both the capital and Heaven.' The Emperor wrote the poem: 'What avails me this elixir of immortality, I who float in tears shed because I cannot meet her again?'

He gave the poem and the jar containing the elixir to a messenger, whom he ordered to take these things to the summit of the mountain in Suruga. He instructed him to place the letter and the jar side by side, set them on fire, and let them be consumed in the flames. The man accepted the command and climbed the mountain with a great many other soldiers. They gave the name of Fuji to the mountain.<sup>21)</sup> Even now the smoke is said to be rising into the clouds.

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21) Example of a folk etymology. *Fuji*, meaning 'not-die', and referring to the elixir of immortality, is given as the origin of the mountain's name.